

**THE** problem of converting chances, which has dogged Wycombe Wanderers all season, saw them go down to their seventh defeat in the Isthmian League Premier Division when they visited Leatherhead on Saturday.

This meeting of two famous F.A. Cup giantkillers, ironically staged on a day when both might have been involved in the second round, produced some excellent football in patches but both teams failed to make the most of their pressure. In the end it was fitting that the game's outstanding player, John Cooper, should get the deciding score.

Cooper was the difference between the sides. A hard worker, he showed cool class in tight corners and had he worn a blue shirt, I reckon it would have been Wycombe taking the three points at the end. Leatherhead had another matchwinner, though.

John Swannell, holder of countless England amateur caps, showed why he was the country's choice with two priceless saves in the first half. His second tip-over from John Priestley would have beaten any other mortal. Overall he had probably more to do than his Wycombe counterpart Peter Spittle and he responded brilliantly.

Despite Swannell, however, Wycombe still had more scoring chances especially in the first half when they were clearly the superior side. Howard Kennedy, Graham Mackenzie and Priestley grabbed a firm

## Leatherhead 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0 REPORT BY STUART EARP

hold of midfield and kept the Blues ticking forward nicely while the back four looked safe. Alan Phillips and Keith Mead were seldom bettered by John Baker in the air while Chris Kelly as always beat himself by infuriatingly hanging onto the ball.

Up front Wanderers never seemed to have the run of the ball. They carved out a number of chances but either a Leatherhead leg or Swannell kept them out.

### LECTURES

With Bob Davies injured and Steve Vass still feeling the effects of an injection, Farouk Quraishi came in at left back and had quite a tussle with the diminutive Johnny Doyle which produced lectures for both players from referee Ward. Tony Horseman and John Priestley kept their places in the side.

From the start no quarter was asked or given by the Tanners' defence but Wycombe settled after 15 minutes and Paul Birdseye was

most unlucky not to put them ahead. A fine move on the right found Birdseye supporting infield. Running across the box he cleverly tried to chip over Swannell but the goalkeeper arched back and tipped the ball up for a corner. Three minutes later the goalkeeper made an even better save when Priestley strode through and made the most of the space provided to hammer in a drive. Swannell's fingertips again prevented a goal.

Those saves were the turning point in the game. Wycombe might have been two up and cruising but as it was they had nothing to show for their toils. At the other end the back four's performance protected Spittle until the 24th minute when he dived at Baker's feet.

Before the break Wycombe again went close when Horseman's flick put Harris through but Swannell parried the shot and then Barrie Davies cleared two yards from his goalline.

Leatherhead, who had been strangely quiet in the first half, burst into life only seconds after the interval. Doyle flicked a ball into the path of Baker who thumped a shot goalwards only to see Spittle dive full length to save. Billy Salkeld headed wide soon afterwards and in the 57th minute Cooper popped up to grab the only goal.

### COOPER SCORES

Doyle started it again, pushing a pass through to Cooper who reached the ball a fraction of a second before Mead. Spittle got a hand to the shot but it had sufficient momentum to find the corner of the net. Wycombe brought on Dylan Evans for Horseman two minutes later.

Kelly should have sewn it all up in the 66th minute when Cooper found him inside the box. He wriggled past one tackle but Spittle blocked his shot and then Mead somehow managed to clear off his line with an overhead kick. Then in another hectic scramble a Dennit Malley effort was also blocked on the line.

Wanderers fought back gamely in the final 15 minutes with Mackenzie going close. Wycombe though, had lost their midfield domination with several players looking tired and jaded.

There was one final chance for the Blues to share the points but 'that man' Swannell deprived Evans with a competent save two minutes from time.

**LEATHERHEAD:** J. Swannell; B. Davies, D. Malley, D. Reid, R. Eaton; W. Salkeld (sub J. Bailey 68 mins), J. Cooper, M. Cook; C. Kelly, J. Baker, J. Doyle.

**WYCOMBE:** P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, F. Quraishi; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, H. Kennedy; A. Horseman (sub Evans 60 mins), D. Harris, M. Hollifield.

**Referee:** A. Ward (Southgate).

**Half-time:** 0-0. **Goalscorer:** Cooper (57).

## Trophy 'preview' for Wycombe

WYCOMBE stage their final game before the Christmas break tomorrow (Tuesday) when they travel to Witney Town for a Shaw and Kilburn League fixture.

This is the second time the clubs have met this season as Wanderers went to Witney for a friendly in August. Blues supporters will be hoping for a better display this time — Wycombe went down 1-0 on their last visit.

More importantly, Witney will give Wycombe some idea of the standard of Southern League Division One North football. On January 14 the Blues face a trip to Bridgend in the first round of the FA Trophy and both Witney and Bridgend play in Division One North. Indeed, Witney are top of the table and Bridgend fifth.

On Wednesday evening, Wycombe Wanderers Youth will be hoping to continue their excellent form when they meet Wokingham Youth at Loakes Park in the Berger Paints Isthmian Youth Cup. Wycombe have won their last three games, including a 3-0 triumph at Wokingham.

### ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

December 21, 1978

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dagenham	24	13	6	5	40	22	45
Wycombe	23	13	4	6	35	21	43
Enfield	19	11	6	2	26	15	39
Tooting	25	11	5	9	51	45	38
Hitchin	17	11	3	3	26	16	38
Leatherhead	21	11	2	8	32	21	35
Tilbury	21	11	2	8	23	22	35
Sutton	22	10	4	8	31	29	34
Walthamstow	22	10	3	9	29	29	33
Leytonstone	19	9	4	6	30	24	31
Stortford	21	9	4	8	31	26	31
Slough	20	9	4	7	28	24	31
Hendon	21	8	3	10	28	30	27
Croydon	19	7	4	8	17	19	24
Hayes	21	7	3	11	23	33	24
Staines	18	6	5	7	16	18	23
Barking	20	7	2	11	22	29	23
Woking	20	6	4	10	24	28	22
Southall	21	6	4	11	31	38	22
Dulwich	22	4	6	12	26	38	18
Kingstonian	20	4	4	12	20	32	16
Ilford	20	2	4	14	9	37	10

WYCOMBE Wanderers, who have just passed the half-way mark in their Isthmian League campaign, are now four points better off after 23 matches compared with last season.

Although the Blues have the same number of defeats, they have won two more games. The main difference, however, is at the top. Last term Dagenham were just two points clear while Enfield now lead the field by 14 points.

Elsewhere in the league, the fortunes of clubs continue to ebb and flow. Bishop's Stortford for example, are firmly rooted to the bottom of the table whereas they were 11th last season. Croydon have improved considerably this year while Tilbury have dropped from seventh last year to third from bottom.

### ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

December 16, 1977

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	24	19	4	1	57	16	61
Wycombe	23	15	2	6	41	24	47
Hitchin	23	13	5	5	40	25	44
Leatherhead	23	12	6	5	43	22	42
Tooting	24	12	6	6	36	27	42
Dagenham	25	12	4	9	45	37	40
Croydon	23	11	4	8	36	31	37
Hayes	24	10	6	8	29	28	36
Hendon	26	10	6	10	34	34	36
Staines	23	9	7	7	28	32	34
Carshalton	23	9	6	8	38	33	33
Sutton	22	9	5	8	25	31	32
Slough	23	8	3	12	32	40	27
Walthamstow	19	7	5	7	26	28	26
Barking	22	8	2	12	33	36	26
Boreham	18	7	4	7	24	29	25
Woking	20	6	1	13	30	37	19
Leytonstone	24	3	10	11	27	41	19
Southall	22	4	7	11	21	39	19
Tilbury	20	4	6	10	27	36	18
Kingstonian	22	4	5	13	21	34	17
Stortford	23	1	6	16	21	54	9